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TAGS: [ENRG](#) [SENV](#) [EAGR](#) [KPAO](#) [OEXC](#) [SCUL](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY-IRAQ WATER TALKS - FORMULAIC BUT TALKING

REF. A) 06 ANKARA 4462

B) 06 ANKARA 3324

C) 06 ANKARA 404

11. SUMMARY: (SBU) Turkey and Iraq held their second bilateral water dialogue in 2006 in Ankara on December 14. Like the earlier May 24 meeting, delegations repeated long-held positions and quibbled over the agenda and language. The two sides agreed to meet again, and the Iraqis again proposed Baghdad for the venue. The Iraqi delegation included a representative of the KRG (Erbil DG Water and Irrigation). The GOT MFA remains suspicious of the long proposed Turkey-Iraq Voluntary Visit program, questioning U.S. impartiality. End Summary.

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Second Bilateral Water Dialogue in 2006 - Ilisu Dam  
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12. (SBU) Characterizing the meeting, GOT MFA water director Esen Altug stressed the cooperative atmosphere and technical data exchange, observing that the DSI (State Water Administration) Director General received the Iraqi delegation. She noted that the Iraqis initially proposed an agenda that was accusatory, rather than facilitative, particularly claiming that the Turks had not provided information on Ilisu Dam. The meeting went ahead with a toned down agenda. Altug claimed that the GOT provided additional information on the Ilisu Dam, supplementing the three slides presented in May, including the web site with links to the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and other reports. She reiterated Turkey's determination to move forward on the Ilisu Dam, with or without European export credit agency financing (still reportedly under due diligence on meeting EU standards). She noted that, like in May, the Iraqis asked no questions about Ilisu. Altug stressed that Turkey aimed to provide information, but this did not constitute or necessitate "consultation" (implying Iraqi approval).

13. (SBU) Altug noted the Iraqi oft-repeated request that the Turks maintain the extra 200 cubic meters per second water flow in the Euphrates. The Turks argued that this is not an obligation that they can guarantee. While noting current acute need for hydroelectric electricity and therefore the requirement to push ample water flow, Turkey could not predict future electricity needs and/or rainfall/snow-pack. Altug reiterated that Ilisu would be used primarily for hydroelectric operation, and only little for irrigation (using more efficient sprinkle method, rather than the canal system primarily used on the Euphrates).

14. (SBU) The two sides agreed to step up data exchange and technical cooperation, including training of Iraqi engineers at DSI. Altug said the Iraqis requested data exchange every ten days. The Turks said this was impossible and impractical and endeavored to propose a more reasonable period like six months. The two sides set

up emergency direct communication mechanisms, but Altug admitted that there had been no contact during late autumn flooding. The Iraqi side proposed that the next meeting be in Iraq. The Turks were noncommittal and timing was not determined. Altug complained again that the Iraqi written presentation was in Arabic. The Iraqi Embassy promised to provide a translation.

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USG VOLVIS Study Visit  
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15. (SBU) The MFA energy-water office has been supportive of our proposal for a Turkey-Iraq officials study visit (transportation funded by OES) to facilitate dialogue and offer U.S. experiences for water management and trans-boundary issues (Ref C). Both Altug and DDG Mithat Rende told us that there was some "political" resistance in MFA questioning whether this proposal would be in Turkey's interest and questioning USG impartiality on this subject given the advisory role the U.S. plays in Iraq. Altug said that numerous senior transitions in the MFA were slowing approval for the proposal, but she was confident that approval would be garnered in January.

16. (SBU) COMMENT: Albeit formulaic and repeating long held positions, the establishment of regular bilateral dialogue is a huge leap forward. The two sides managed to set a date and pull it off with Embassies Ankara and Baghdad only providing confirmation of communication. The presence of a KRG rep is noteworthy and reflective of the regional reality of water issues. Trans-boundary water remains a highly sensitive issue for Turkey, and MFA remains cautious on our VOLVIS proposal, albeit fully funded by the USG.

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